

DISABLED ON THE DANCE FLOOR

Let it be known that you don't like to cook, and few people raise an eyebrow. Announce to the world that you never play chess, and the world accepts this. Mention your inability to carry a tune, or the fact that you don't participate in sports, and others shrug and say, "That's okay—we've all been given different gifts."

But tell people, "I don't like to dance," and they slowly back away from you with suspicious stares. "You don't like to *dance*?" they ask, as if you'd just told them you don't like to breathe.

"But *anyone* can dance," some woman is always assuring me. "You just go along with the rhythm."

"When the rhythm starts," I tell her, "I go along home."

"But dancing is easy!" the woman insists. "Here—let me show you."

At this point she yanks my arm to pull me out of my chair, onto the dance floor. I struggle to stay seated. If she is muscular, she manages to drag me, still clinging to my chair, halfway across the room before it finally hits her— "Gee...he really *doesn't* like to dance!" She drops my arm. With a confused look, she shakes her head and walks away, keeping a safe distance between herself and me, The Social Freak, for the rest of the evening.

I've always been dancing disabled. Occasionally, circumstances beyond my control have forced me onto the dance floor. At sixteen I was an usher in my brother's wedding. While the band played, I highlighted my role as Bridal Party Geek with a

classic display of rhythm retardation. My attempts at dancing had the photographer laughing so hard, every picture taken of me that night captured what appeared to be a tuxedoed smudge.

When you dance, the steps should flow from you naturally. When I dance, the only thing flowing from me is perspiration.

Four hundred years ago, Puritan clergymen condemned dancing as blasphemous, a profane activity to be publicly suppressed. God bless them! I'm sorry I was born centuries too late to enjoy the benefits of their intolerance. Puritan ministers would have labeled my dancing as clearly Satanic. Only demonic possession could explain the bizarre contortions my body makes on the dance floor.

Dancing should involve graceful, coordinated movements that are pleasing to watch—not the stiff, jerky flailing of body parts in random directions. Some people dance the way a greyhound runs. I dance like a rabid junkyard dog, weaving its diseased way through the dump, its teeth clenched in a tortured grin. On the dance floor I should be shot, to put onlookers out of their misery.

The last time I found myself on a dance floor, a stranger rushed over to cram his wallet into my mouth. He thought I was having a seizure.

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